Community

Family

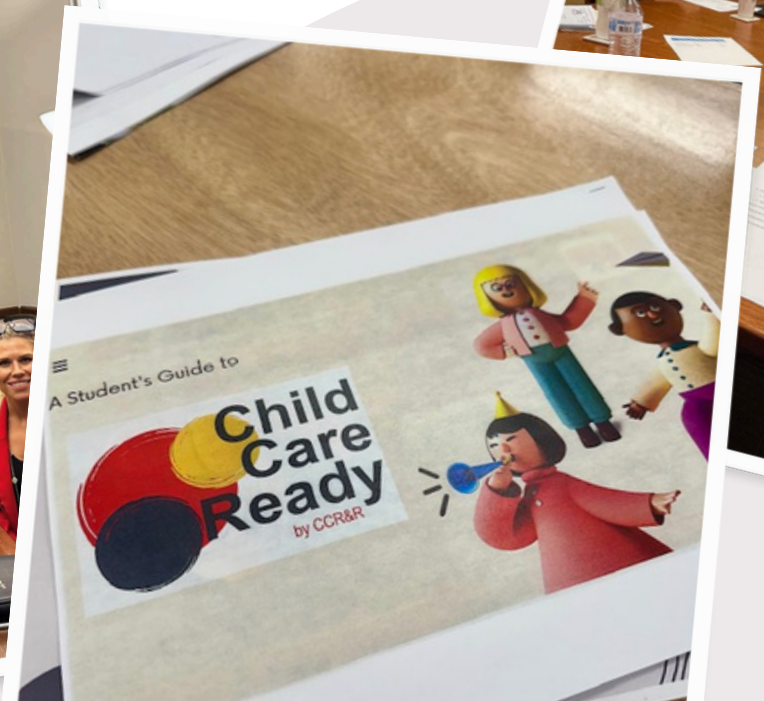
Business

Child Care Works

A Child Care Workforce Initiative

childcareworksnorthiowa.com







CHILD CARE WORKS PARTNERS

- CG Public Health
- Charlie Brown Preschool & Child Care
- Child Care Resource & Referral
- Greater Mason City Chamber of Commerce
- Iowa Women's Foundation
- Mason City Community School District
- Mason City Family YMCA
- North Iowa Area Community College
- North Iowa Corridor EDC

PARTICIPATING CHILD CARE CENTERS

- Lake Town Charlie Brown Preschool & Child Care
- Newman Childcare and Preschool
- Redeemer Preschool & Daycare
- Tugs Daycare and Preschool
- Washington Charlie Brown Preschool and Childcare
- West Town Charlie Brown Preschool & Child Care

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Mason City Chamber Foundation
Colleen Frein, Administrator
9 N Federal Ave
Mason City, IA 50401
cfrein@masoncityia.com

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION
IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization

ABOUT CHILD CARE WORKS

Child Care Works was established in 2023 to address the growing child care shortage in Cerro Gordo County. Limited access to reliable care affected families, constrained local providers, and created workforce challenges for area employers. Child care was increasingly recognized not only as a family need, but as essential workforce infrastructure.



The collaborative brought together child care providers, employers, educators, and community partners to identify the root causes of the shortage. Research, provider input, and local data revealed a fundamental issue: workforce.

Child care centers had the physical capacity to serve hundreds of additional children but lacked the employees needed to open and staff those classrooms. Low wages were a primary barrier to recruitment and retention, yet providers had limited ability to increase compensation without raising costs for families.



From the beginning, Child Care Works has been supported by a broad mix of public and private funding. Local businesses provided significant early investment, which helped leverage matching funds from the State of Iowa. Municipal support, grants, and additional community investments have continued to sustain and expand the work, reflecting a shared commitment to strengthening child care across Cerro Gordo County.

This collective investment allowed Child Care Works to implement a coordinated, data-driven strategy focused on recruitment and retention, workforce development, advocacy, and the long-term stability of local providers. The collaborative continues to measure results and adapt its approach to strengthen the child care system that families, employers, and the regional economy depend upon.

PROGRAMS OF WORK

Sustainable Wage Growth: Wage Supplement Program

In January 2024, Child Care Works launched a $2/hour wage supplement for eligible child care employees. The strategy was designed to increase staffing, allowing centers to serve more children, generate additional revenue, and ultimately sustain higher wages on their own.

The program continued through June 2026, significantly strengthening recruitment and retention while increasing access to reliable child care. As the supplement was phased out, every participating center was able to absorb most of the $2/hour increase into its own wage structure, creating a lasting improvement in child care compensation beyond the program itself.

> "The Child Care Works program has made it so I can afford diapers and food for my family."
>
> Center Staff Member

CHILD CARE WORKS IMPACT JANUARY 2024 – JUNE 2026*



*Data reported bimonthly from participating centers

PROGRAMS OF WORK

Workforce Pipeline: Child Care Ready

Child Care Works partners developed Child Care Ready to build a sustainable pipeline of qualified child care professionals. The program prepares high school students and adults for employment by completing key prerequisites, including background checks, mandatory reporter training, CPR certification, and other required coursework.



CHILD CARE READY CLASS

Participants complete the program prepared to enter the child care workforce, reducing barriers for both new employees and employers. Mason City High School completed its third Child Care Ready class in 2026, and Child Care Works is now working to expand the program to additional school districts throughout the region.

Industry Advocacy

Child Care Works advocates at the local, state, and federal levels for policies that strengthen the child care workforce and improve the sustainability of the industry. Priorities include increasing compensation, improving access to benefits, and removing barriers to entering and remaining in the profession.

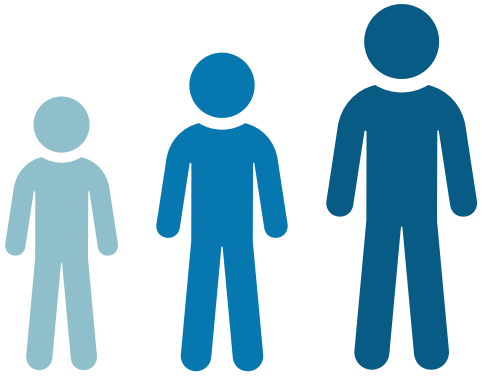
Through efforts such as A Day Without Child Care, local providers and partners have elevated the essential role child care plays in supporting families, employers, and the economy.

A significant policy win was the codification of Child Care Assistance eligibility for employees of licensed child care centers. This change helps remove a major barrier for child care professionals by ensuring those who care for children can access affordable care for their own families.



STAY & GROW PROGRAM

Building on the success and lessons of the Wage Supplement Program, Child Care Works is transitioning to a more sustainable model focused on retaining experienced child care professionals, rewarding longevity, and encouraging continued investment in quality. Supported by a grant from the North Iowa Children's Alliance and continued business investment, Stay & Grow provides targeted incentives for both center employees and child development home providers.



Child Care Center Employees

Eligible child care center employees will receive a semi-annual retention bonus based on years of service, equivalent to $100 per year of service, up to $500 per period and $1,000 annually. By rewarding longevity, Stay & Grow is designed to reduce turnover, retain experienced professionals, and provide greater stability for children, families, and providers.

To participate, centers must be quality-rated and provide year-round care for children from birth through age five, ensuring investments support consistent, high-quality care.

Child Development Homes

Stay & Grow also recognizes the important role child development homes, commonly known as in-home providers, play in the region's child care system. Annual bonuses will encourage providers to maintain certification and continue investing in quality. Providers who maintain ChildCareNet certification will receive a $500 annual bonus. Those who complete ChildCareNet 3.1 training and maintain certification will receive a $1,000 annual bonus.

Business Investment

The long-term success of Stay & Grow depends on continued investment from the business community. Employer support will help sustain this more financially responsible model while demonstrating a shared commitment to the child care professionals who make it possible for thousands of parents to participate in the workforce.

Participating businesses will also receive priority placement at participating child care centers, providing a meaningful benefit for employees seeking care.

By investing in Stay & Grow, businesses are investing directly in the strength and stability of the region's workforce.

EMPLOYER PLEDGE BENEFITS

Child Care Works CHAMPION: $25,000+

- 25 waitlist slots at participating child care centers
- Logo included on all marketing items
- Business name included in all media interviews

Child Care Works INVESTOR: $10,000

- 15 waitlist slots at participating child care centers
- Logo included on all marketing items

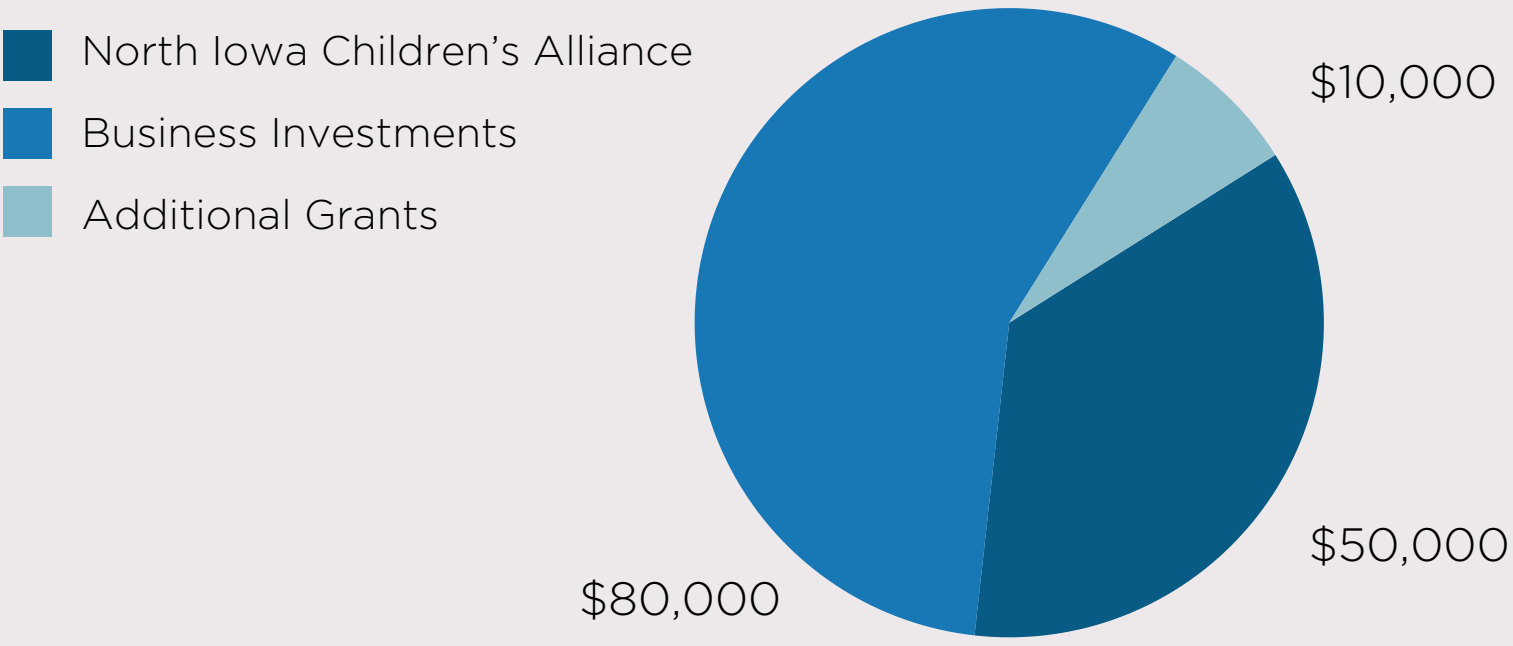
Child Care Works SUPPORTER: $5,000

- 10 waitlist slots at participating child care centers
- Logo included on all marketing items

Child Care Works FRIEND: $1,000

- 5 waitlist slots at participating child care centers
- Name included on all marketing items

STAY & GROW ANNUAL PROGRAM COST: $140,000



Contact:
Child Care Works
c/o Mason City Chamber of Commerce Foundation
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Mason City, IA 50401
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Colleen Frein | cfrein@masoncityia.com
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